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Slavery

SPEECH

OF

PEACHY R. GRATTAN, Esq.,

IN THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

AT

CLEVELAND, JUNE 2, 1857.

RICHMOND:

H. K. ELLYSON'S STEAM POWER PRESSES, 147 MAIN STREET.

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S P E E C H .

MR. MODERATOR—

Before I proceed to discuss the question before us, I feel that it is due to myself to express my deep sense of the kindly feeling and Christian courtesy with which we of the South have been treated by the members of this Assembly. We have, indeed, heard harsh denunciations of slavery; denunciations unfounded in fact, and displaying the ignorance and prejudice of the persons who uttered them, but for ourselves, personally, we have nothing of which we may complain, unless it be a remark of the member who spoke first on yesterday.

Mr. Moderator, this discussion may well lead us to think that he would render a great service to this body, who would give us an effective address upon man's responsibility for his belief. One may well conclude, from what we have heard here, that the opinion is prevalent that it is only necessary to be sincere in the sentiments we express; and that if we follow the promptings of conscience, our responsibility is fully met. Now, sir, in my opinion, members have wholly mistaken the office of conscience. That faculty is given us to prompt us to do right, and to restrain us from wrong; but the right and the wrong are to be ascertained by the understanding and the judgment: and if we fail properly to employ these in our search for truth and duty, conscience can but lead us astray. To go no further than the subject before us for illustration. The slavery of the South is the most important, as it is the most difficult problem, both in its political and moral bearings, that can occupy the public mind; and

members here must be sensible that their opinions upon it have been formed under circumstances well calculated to mislead the judgment. ¶ Of necessity, there has been and is great ignorance, on the part of Northern members, of the system itself, and of its practical workings; there has been strong prejudice, strong passion, and great excitement, and under these conditions and influences, opinions have been formed. And yet, without a doubt of the correctness of these opinions, members, with a purpose as fixed as destiny, are ready and eager to carry out their views, without a thought as to the consequences of their action. ¶

In the discussion of this subject, I propose to consider what has been, and will be, the results of this agitation. And first, what have been and are to be its results in the North. On this subject, I shall express myself with freedom; but I trust in the spirit which becomes the place, as a court of Jesus Christ, and the occasion. If I shall say any thing which may sound harsh to Northern ears, let me assure you that I shall not speak to give offence, but because I think your good, and our good, alike demand it; and I trust that our Northern brethren will exercise a little of that patience upon which they have required us to make such heavy drafts.

{ First, then, one obvious result of this agitation has been to withdraw the mind and efforts of the church North from the commission given to it by its great head. That commission is, "Go ye into all the world, and preach my gospel to every creature." And in the true spirit of that commission, the great apostle of the Gentiles declared that he determined to know nothing among the people with whom and for whom he labored, but "Jesus Christ and him crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but to them that believe, the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation." For the evidence of this result to which I have referred, we need not go beyond this General Assembly. As I, a stranger, unknowing

and unknown, stood amidst the crowd which assembled in the basement of this house on the morning of the first day of our meeting, I was obliged to hear the conversations of various groups assembled there ; and I heard on every side slavery, slavery, slavery, slavery ; but among all that crowd I did not once hear an allusion to Christ and his cause. And as you pass along these streets, and hear the conversation which is carried on, it is still slavery, slavery. Christ would seem to be ignored in the house of his friends, and the slave exalted to his place.

Mr. Moderator, the statistics furnished us on yesterday by the venerable father from Harrisburg, (Dr. Dewitt,) certainly did not surprise me ; and the explanation of the fact given by the member from the Synod of Western Reserve, (Dr. Newton,) who came to the defence of the Synod, was precisely the explanation which I anticipated. And we have thus had the fact stated, that the number of conversions among this people has been greatly diminished in the last two years ; and we have that fact referred to the agitation of this subject of slavery, as a result of that agitation. And, sir, I would appeal to the members of this Assembly, and I would ask them whether the experience of the Synod of Western Reserve is peculiar to itself. What has been the result of this agitation upon your churches generally A member states that they have had revivals in some of the churches, and the ministers who labored in them were zealous anti-slavery ministers. But he does not tell us that they preached slavery in those revivals. They forgot slavery for the time, and preached Christ, and God blessed them. I would ask brethren, in all sober earnestness and solemnity, in view of the present result of this agitation, what is to be the condition of their churches, if this agitation is to be continued ?

(Another result of this agitation upon the North is, that many who could not shut their eyes to the fact that slavery is countenanced in the Bible, have gone off into infidelity ;)

whilst others, to hold to their hope in Christ, have resorted to modes and principles of interpretation of God's word, which shock the sober sense of all men who retain any portion of it, and must, wherever adopted, undermine and destroy all reverence for the Bible. \ Further: The doctrine has been proclaimed that a book which violates the instincts of our nature, will not and ought not to be received as a revelation from God. "Nay, but Oh man, who art thou that repliest against God?" "Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" To such men, I would commend the careful study of the book of Job. There they will find men who undertook to determine what God should do, and they will find the result of their reasoning. I would commend them, too, to the study of the first chapter of Romans, where they will find stated, by an inspired apostle, the results to which men arrive by following the instincts of their nature. Sir, these instincts of man's nature gave to Græce her thirty thousand gods, and has filled the heathen world, in all ages, with idolatry and pollution.

And I would ask of these men who think they can find out God to perfection, when they have studied his creation in all its vast and minute proportions, upon what page of that book do they find written that one word, MERCY—compassion for the guilty. Let them point us to it, or leave us that gospel which brings life and immortality to light; that we may sympathise with the apostle as he exclaims, "Oh, the depths of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever."

(A third result of this agitation on the North, is to be observed in the spirit which is exhibited both in the State and

the Church. The Apostle has said that the "wisdom which is from above is first pure, then peaceable, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits." And he has said that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." And our Lord has himself said, "by their fruits ye shall know them." Now what is the spirit which has been generated by this agitation? It bears witness to itself all around us. A fiery zeal, a fierce intolerance, which will hear no evidence, will bear no opposition, will tolerate no difference of opinion. Look at the case of Judge Loring: turned out of Harvard; driven from the bench of justice, so far as the Legislature of the proud Commonwealth of Massachusetts could effect its purpose—and for what? Tell it not in Gath!—because he administered the law of the land as he understood it; as it was enacted by the Congress of the U. States; and as it has been adjudged to be by the highest judicial tribunal in the land. So too in the Church. Look at Dr. Adams, of Boston! His crime is, not that he loves slavery or defends it, but, having seen it with his own eyes, he has dared to tell the world that it is not quite so completely the child of hell as he and they had supposed. And for this offence enlightened Christians in New England have ousted him, as I learn, from all office in their Christian Associations. Now, sir, to go no further, I would ask, is this the wisdom that cometh from above? Are these the fruits of the Spirit? Or rather, is it not the same spirit which kindled the fires of Smithfield, and conceived and worked the Inquisition?

(The last result of this agitation upon the North to which I will call your attention, is the weakening of those ties which bind this Union together. The links of that chain are parting, and you are about to break another, and almost the last, so far as the churches are concerned. There is now among the leading men of the South a desire for the dissolution of the Union. South Carolina has been ready

for it for years ; and if things progress as they have been going for some time past, the conviction will come home to the people of Virginia and the South generally, that our interest and our safety demand a separation.) When that day comes, men may weep over their madness in dust and ashes ; but they will find that they have committed that unpardonable political sin, for which there is neither forgiveness nor relief.

And now, Mr. Moderator, it is not in my heart to give offence to brethren, either in or out of this Assembly, and what I am about to say, I say because I think it worthy of the consideration of the Northern Church. From an early period your ministers have taken part in the public concerns of the country, in a manner to which we of the South are wholly unused ; and we have witnessed their action upon the public questions by which the country is now convulsed. Now, sir, the history of the world shows that the very worst government in the world is the government of priests or clergymen. And this can be truthfully explained without any disparagement to them. Their office calls them to cultivate the affections. Love, kindness, compassion, are the graces which they are to foster in their own hearts, and enforce upon their people. Of necessity, therefore, they take the humanitarian view of every political question. And it is just there that they err. The great attribute of a ruler is justice. It is the crowning attribute of the sovereign God himself, by which his other attributes are limited and directed. Rather than that one jot or tittle of his law should fail, he laid upon his own Son the iniquities of us all. And so of an earthly ruler, the great quality is inflexible justice ; and the greatest defect which can mark such a ruler, is to possess a heart that is warmer than his head is strong.

I am asked, if, when troops were raised in the Southern States for Kansas, the ministers did not preach, pray and make speeches in favor of it. I distinctly say, that I never

heard of an instance of the kind. A friend near me informs me, that when a company left Mobile for Kansas, ministers united with them in prayer before their departure. But, sir, the arms with which these ministers furnished them were not *Sharpe's Rifles*, but THE BIBLE; thus acting, in this case, within the letter and spirit of their commission.

Mr. Moderator, I have another remark to make before leaving this branch of the subject. I hope it will be taken in good part: It is uttered in no unkind spirit. (I apprehend, that Northern Christians have taken up the impression, that their zeal on this subject of Southern slavery is an indication of a high order of piety. Will you allow me, with all kindness, to question the correctness of that impression. Christ and his cause is the great central animating truth to the heart of a Christian; and the nearer we approach to God and to heaven, the dearer does this truth become to us. But when a church or a Christian is declining in piety; when the conscience is more awakened than the heart is warm, then does such a church or such a Christian lay hold upon something that is external, something that is more in accordance with the instincts of our nature, than is Christ, by which the conscience may be satisfied and the heart left undisturbed to enjoy its more earthly tastes.

And now, Mr. Moderator, I desire to speak of the results of this agitation upon the South. It has been going on for twenty years. The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church has been bearing its testimony against slavery for sixty years, and what has been the result? I will tell you. } First. It has put an end to all schemes of legislative emancipation. Such a thing is now not heard of.

Second. It has greatly lessened the number of slaves emancipated by individuals. I will not suspect that any member of this General Assembly is connected with an underground railroad; but if there be any such person outside of the Assembly who hears me, I will say to him, that if he flatters himself he has aided to diminish the number of

slaves, he is greatly mistaken. For every slave that has been thus stolen, this agitation has, to speak in your own language, riveted the letters of five.

Third. The severity of our legislation has been increased, and will be increased still further. I shall not be surprised if emancipation is prohibited.

Fourth. It has changed the public sentiment on the subject of emancipation. I speak especially of Virginia. From the Revolution down to 1834, the sentiment in Virginia in favor of the emancipation of the slave population, was steadily progressive. In 1785 the law was passed authorizing the emancipation of slaves; and in 1806, the number emancipated had become so great, that the General Assembly of Virginia was compelled to interfere, and to require that slaves thereafter emancipated should leave the State. And as the fruits of the emancipations previous to that time, we now have a population of free negroes numbering upwards of fifty-four thousand. As late as the winter of 1831-32, the subject was discussed in the Legislature of Virginia; and on that occasion the leading organs of both the political parties came out in favor of gradual emancipation. /

But sir, the North commenced this agitation, and compelled us to consider it, as it is, a great practical question. We have been obliged to re-consider the whole subject; and now I speak with confidence when I say, that the public mind of Virginia is settled in the conviction that emancipation, in the present condition of the slaves and of the world, is a great crime, or an impossibility—a great crime, if they are to be emancipated and left where they are; an impossibility, if they are to be removed.

On this great question, which occupies so large a share of the attention of the civilized world, I desire to present briefly the principles on which the South justifies and defends its position. I perceive that members are impatient; but I would remind them that if they will undertake to act in

this Assembly on great political and social questions, they are bound to discuss and to act upon them as statesmen.

Whatever may be the source to which men resort as authority on which to base their opinions on this subject of slavery, the opinions which they adopt are in a great degree founded on their views of the natural rights of man. It is therefore impossible to reach the judgments of men who think, without entering somewhat into the subject. And unfortunately, there is no subject upon which sensible men have written with less precision, or written more nonsense. These writers set a man down in solitude in the full vigor of his faculties, physical and intellectual, and having ascertained what he may do in such a condition, come at once to the conclusion that what he may do in that condition constitutes his natural rights. Such a condition, it is obvious, never existed in fact since Eve was formed: and it is equally obvious, that its existence was never intended by his Creator. Man, by the constitution of his nature, is a social creature: and society is as much a necessity of his nature, as are light and food. He cannot be born but in society; and his helpless infancy demands the fostering care and protection of another. So, too, in society, there are relations of necessity; and there are conditions varying as between the different members of society, and varying in the same person at different periods of his existence. When, therefore, we come to inquire into the natural rights of man, if we would ascertain them correctly, he is to be viewed not simply as an isolated individual, but as he is, having a nature of his own, physical, moral and intellectual, a member of society holding various relations to that society, and these relations, sometimes changing, and himself subject to changes of condition; and the rights which the man in these relations and conditions possesses, are his natural rights. He has eyes, and in the absence of any disqualification, he has a natural right to see. He is born blind, and the natural right to see does not exist. He lives by eating, and the

earth is given to furnish him with food, and he has a natural right to food, if he will provide it for himself. He is unmarried, and he has a natural right to all the liberty which belongs to his condition, untrammelled as it is by a wife and children. He becomes a husband and a father, and his natural rights in these new relations differ from his natural rights in his former condition, and are necessarily limited by the natural rights of his wife and children; for the natural rights of no one person can conflict with the natural rights of another. It is God who confers natural rights; and therefore the rights of each and of all must be consistent. So in all the relations and conditions which man may sustain in himself or towards his fellow-man, he bears a relation to society, out of which other natural rights both in himself and in society arise; and he can have no rights which conflict with the rights of society. Further: Rights and duties are correlative; and the natural duties of man or society vary, but correspond exactly with the natural rights of other men or of society; and thus a right in one imposes a corresponding duty in another. The enjoyment of his natural rights is the right of the man: the duty of protecting him in that enjoyment is the duty of society. The right of society to protect each member in the enjoyment of his rights, and to secure its own well-being, is the right of society; and the corresponding duty rests on each member to regard this right.

Whether government is in the order of nature, it is needless to enquire. We know that God is a sovereign God, doing his pleasure in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and that angels are ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But however this may be, when man fell, government became a necessity—as that organization, whatever its form, by and through which society acts to enforce its own rights as against its members, and to enforce the rights of each member against every other. The office of government,

therefore, is to restrict, not the natural rights of man, but his crimes, vices, misconduct—whatever interferes with the natural rights of men, or the well-being of society; and our natural rights and their protection and enjoyment are the objects of government, and in fact *dependent* upon it. And thus we arrive at the English and American idea of liberty; liberty regulated and protected by law, in opposition to the French idea of liberty, as synonymous with license.

The authority of society or government to protect its members and its own well-being, is measured by their rights. Whatever is necessary to these ends, it must of necessity possess. The authority to punish crimes against its members or its own well-being is recognized on all hands. And the principle on which punishment may be inflicted is equally well settled. This principle is not that government may inflict upon an offender a punishment equal to his offence; for God alone may determine that question; but to punish for the protection and well-being of society itself. For this purpose it is every day's practice to deprive a member of society of life, liberty or property. Where, then, is this inalienable right to life and liberty. In such cases the natural right is at an end, and the right of society to take them has arisen. So the right of society to guard against the evil effects of a man's depravity upon itself, is everywhere recognized, and daily enforced. To effect this, a husband may be deprived of his wife, or a parent may be deprived of his child. To guard against these evils, we have a whole body of laws: laws against gaming, against lotteries, against the sale of ardent spirits, against the profanation of the Sabbath. So also the right of society to protect itself and its members against the effects of their own incapacity to take care of themselves, whether arising from imbecility of mind, inexperience, ignorance or indolence. To protect married woman from the improper influence and control of her husband in the disposition of her property, we cover her with legal disabilities to act, or throw around her

the protection of the courts. To guard infants from their own ignorance and inexperience, we put over them guardians. To take care of the interests of idiots and lunatics, we commit them to the protection of committees. When men are without means of living, and though able to work, are too indolent to do it, we take them up, and compel them to support themselves. And this even Dr. Channing says is right. And so when the safety and well-being of society require it, we call upon all men, old and young, rich and poor, yea, the most virtuous in the land, to lay down their lives, it may be, for the defence and protection of the country, which is only another name for society. In all these cases the right of society arises, and the natural right of the man which would conflict with it, ends.

Then the question is, is our slavery necessary to the well-being of the South, including the slaves? If it is, society at the South has a right to maintain and enforce it; and there is no natural right in the slaves to their freedom. The question is not, whether we may go to Africa, and buy or seize men there, and bring them and keep them here as slaves. The principles upon which the right of society to protect itself rests, does not authorize that. Nor is it whether all men may be held in slavery. The well-being of society may not require that. Nor is it whether a man may have unlimited power over his slave.—And here I will pause for a moment to notice an assertion, made first, I believe, by a Senator from Massachusetts, and repeated again and again by the abolition orators of the country, that by the law of South Carolina, a slave is a mere chattel. The law which is referred to is only similar to the laws of all the slaveholding States; and its only object is to declare to what class of property the slaves shall belong. Chattels include all movable property, as distinguished from real estate, which is immovable; and therefore, slaves, not being fixed to the soil, but capable of motion, are properly classed as chattels. But the law does not say that slaves are mere

chattels: the "*mere*" is an interpolation, whether designed or not, I shall not stop to inquire. Neither the law of South Carolina or of any other State, regards slaves as mere chattels. They are, in contemplation of law, rational and accountable beings. As such they are to be treated; as such they are to be protected; and as such they are held responsible for their actions.

Nor is the question, whether slaves may be kept in a state of mental and moral degradation, that their slavery may be prolonged. A great outcry is made because our laws forbid slaves to be taught in schools. Gentlemen must remember that we have not established any general system of public schools in the South, even for the white population. And I may be permitted to express a doubt whether the evils incident to such a system do not more than counterbalance the benefits it confers. But there is no law which prohibits the master or mistress from teaching his slaves, and many are in fact so taught. And I would remind you, sir, that it is the agitation of this subject of slavery at the North, and the attempt to scatter inflammatory publications among the slaves, which induced this law. Slavery had existed in Virginia one hundred and fifty years before it was enacted; and, I doubt not, will survive its repeal for as long a period.

But the true question is, whether the negro, under the conditions and circumstances in which he exists at the South, may be required to render service to his master for life; and may be subjected to the restraints necessary to enforce that service and obedience?

I shall not enter upon the Bible argument for slavery. That has been well done by those who have preceded me. Nor shall I insist, that because slavery was right in the days of Abraham, Moses and the Apostles, it must be right always and everywhere. Its treatment at the times mentioned, proves conclusively that it is not wrong always and everywhere; and we see there the circumstances under which it was at least countenanced by God and his people. And it

is a striking fact, too, that when Moses gave his directions on the subject, the Israelites did not own a slave. There is another fact which we may well consider. In the time of the Apostles, the master and the slave, if not of the same, were of equal races, and there was no distinction of color; so that the difficulties in the way of emancipation at that day, if any existed, were trivial indeed, compared with the difficulties attending the emancipation of the slaves of the South.

We are to remember that our slaves are here, and have been here for five generations. A member has in this discussion characterized slavery as man-stealing; and has insisted that the title having been originally acquired by theft, no time can make it valid. Certainly those who are now here were not stolen. Those who were stolen, were stolen by the North, and sold to the South: and if Northern gentlemen have at this late day discovered that our title is not good on account of its original defect, then I submit, that upon every principle of honor and justice, if we are to surrender the slaves, they should return the purchase-money.

But, further! Do men inherit a right to liberty from their ancestors? And if this is the ground of the right of our slaves to liberty, what sort of liberty is it? A liberty to enjoy or to suffer the lowest form of savage life. A liberty to be sold as a slave in Africa to an African savage: A liberty to know no God but the work of his own hands. A liberty to live and to die without hope and without God. Certainly no man can desire such a change for our slaves. That they are elevated, morally, socially and intellectually, greatly above the race from which they sprang, as that race was and is now in Africa, no man can doubt.

But we do not derive our natural rights by inheritance from our ancestors. Every man holds these rights, whatever they are, by direct grant from God himself; and their nature and extent are to be ascertained from a view of his

own nature, character, capacity, relations and condition. It is thus that the rights of the master and the slave are to be ascertained; and neither can have a right which conflicts with the rights of the other, or with the rights of the society of which he is a member.

It has been well said, that every people are in that condition for which they are fitted by their moral and intellectual capacity. The presumption is against them, that they are not qualified for a greater degree of liberty than they enjoy. The French, with all their intelligence, want the moral qualities which will enable them to maintain a free government. They seem to be incapable of submitting to any other restraint than force, and they are thus continually vascillating between an unrestrained license and a despotism. And our Southern neighbors, having thrown off the Spanish yoke, have been unable to maintain the institutions which they attempted to establish, because they looked to us for their model, without having the moral and intellectual fitness for a government as free as ours. And the consequence has been, that their existence has been a succession of revolutions, ending at one time in despotism, and at another in anarchy. And this must continue until their leaders shall become wise enough to suit their institutions to the capacity of the people, or providence shall accomplish the work for them.

(It is equally vain to give to our slaves liberty until they have the moral and mental capacity to maintain and enjoy it. And he is not a wise man who would place them in any higher position of social or political life, until they have the capacity which will fit them for it. It is a fact which all experience teaches, that when a superior and inferior race are brought into contact, the only alternative of the inferior race is subjection or extermination. \ Nor is it necessary that the inferiority shall arise from a deficiency of natural intellect. Inferiority in physical or moral qualities, or in civilization, is alike fatal to them. This truth is

exemplified on our own frontier. The Indian, with physical qualities, with courage, manliness and independence, which might fit him for civilization, has not retired, but has vanished away, before the march of the white man. And so he will continue to do. Christian effort may preserve a few of the race, but it will be by practically becoming their rulers. Or, if any others are preserved, they will be those whose blood is in part derived from the white man, and who have thus acquired the force of character and the civilization which will enable them to bear the contact with the white race without extinction.

That there are different races of men on the earth, certainly no man can doubt. That these races should be unequal in some respects, is at least probable. That we all consider our own race as standing among the first in physical, moral and intellectual qualities, and in our type of civilization, is beyond a question. That the African has been, for two thousand years, one of the most inferior of the races, his history during all that period most clearly proves. His moral qualities have been of the lowest type. His intellectual faculties have not emitted one spark sufficient to attract, for a moment, the attention of any part of the civilized world. His condition has been that of a savage, so degraded, that he has been elevated in all respects by becoming a slave in America. Now, it is bootless to inquire whether he may not have a capacity for improvement: I trust he has. But he is here with his present capacities; and what we have to determine as a great practical question, is, whether he can be placed in any other condition than that of a slave, with a due regard to his own interest, and the interest of that society of which he forms a part. The fate which has awaited other inferior races, would seem to answer the question. But we are not left to the argument from analogy. I will not speak of the free negroes of the South, because I know, that in the estimation of gentlemen here, I am not a competent witness. But you have

free negroes among you—few it is true, and therefore not a satisfactory test. What is their condition! I ask not for exceptional cases; but, looking to the mass: Are they improving in their physical, moral or intellectual condition? There are numbers of these people in Canada: How are they appreciated there? Since I came to this city, I have heard that the white population in their neighborhood were moving into the United States, to get away from them. But as I have said, the few who are scattered among your large white population can afford no satisfactory test of the capacity of the negro for freedom. Fortunately for the South, our generous brothers of England have made the experiment upon a large scale; and we have authentic evidence as to its success or failure. Three committees of the House of Commons of England have been appointed to inquire and report upon the condition of the West Indies and Guiana. Lord Stanley seems to have been at the head of two of these committees, and Lord George Bentick was chairman of the other. And we have reports of these committees. They describe the islands and Guiana as a desolation. Hundreds of estates valued, before the slaves were emancipated, at millions of dollars, have been abandoned entirely. In the islands the negroes have gone off in numbers to the mountains, rather than labor on the estates, and in Guiana, they have retired into the interior; and they are in fact sinking back into barbarism. This is the testimony of unwilling witnesses; of men whose own hopes were disappointed, and who knew that their testimony would disappoint the hopes and grieve the spirit of the British people. Now, sir, with this example before us, are we to follow it? Will the society of the South discharge its duty to either the white or the black race by converting the whole Southern country into a desolation, and sending our slaves back into barbarism? We are to sacrifice two thousand two hundred millions of dollars, the present value of our slaves, convert our homes into a fruitless wilderness, reduce the six

millions of white population of the South from affluence to poverty, that we may convert our slaves from a well-fed, well-clothed, well-cared-for people, contented and happy in their condition, many of them with the well-founded hopes, and all of them, with the opportunities of salvation, into a miserable horde of ignorant, lazy, starving, licentious barbarians? Sir, if we might without sin inflict such an injury upon ourselves, heaven, if not earth, would cry out against the injustice to our slaves. Anti-slavery men of the North seem to suppose, that our slaves have no rights, except the right to their liberty. They are mistaken throughout. They have no right to their liberty at present; but they have a right to protection—protection against themselves, their own indolence, improvidence, ignorance and incapacity to take care of themselves. And the duty of the master is correlative. He cannot escape from it, and he is bound to perform it. As well might a father turn his infant son out of his house before he had taught him how to take care of himself, as may masters send their slaves into freedom, without capacity to provide for themselves.

But, sir, emancipate the slaves and leave them where they are, and they will not live long enough to become barbarians. Homeless, pennyless, friendless outcasts, indolent and sensual by nature, improvident by training, ignorant and immoral, without counsellor or protector, a degraded race, feeling no restraints from public opinion, they would, from the necessity of their nature and condition, render their presence among us an evil too great to be endured, and in the frenzy aroused by their crimes, they would be exterminated.

Mr. Moderator, what I have said as to the capacity of our slaves for freedom, will apply equally whether we consider them as remaining among us, or removed to another land. In some respects, possibly, their condition might be better, if removed. But to that there is an insuperable objection; it is impossible. Take the State of Virginia. We have in

this State four hundred and twenty-two thousand slaves. In 1850, there were about nine thousand, twenty-one years old. To remove this number annually, as they arrive at the age of twenty-one years, would cost, for collecting them, outfit, transportation, and providing for them until they can make something for themselves, \$2,250,000 a year. This does not include any expenditure for their education, or for providing them homes or houses, or the materials to enable them to provide for themselves. Nor does it include the expense of their government and protection, after being settled in their new homes.

In the United States, there are three millions two hundred and four thousand slaves. Of these there are about sixty thousand of the age of twenty-one years, each year. The cost of removing these at the rates above, would be \$16,800,000, leaving out all the expense of preparing them for freedom by education, and all the expense of providing them with homes, and governing and protecting them. It is entirely within bounds to say, that the removal of the mere increase of our slaves, and providing, governing and protecting them, until they are able to govern and protect themselves, would require a greater expenditure than the whole income of the government of the United States. I may well say, therefore, that the thing is impossible.

What God in his wonder-working providence may hereafter do, it is not for short-sighted man to foresee. The future of this subject is to us an impenetrable unknown. We must accept the present state of things as a necessity, and act accordingly. Our business and our duty is with the present. We may improve the condition of the slave. We may elevate his moral character. There are practical evils which may be removed or lessened. All these things are in progress now. They have been hindered by your agitations. I tell you here to-day, that you of the North have injured the slaves more than you have injured their masters. One good thing you have done for the masters in Virginia,

which possibly compensates for all the evil which has arisen from this excitement. You have brought them to their senses and compelled them to investigate the subject anew. The results of that investigation I have endeavored to present to you to-day. I have not given you the opinions of the extreme men of the South. There are those there who can see nothing in slavery but unimixed good, as you of the North can see nothing but unimixed evil. In this, as in other things, the truth lies between the extremes. If this were the time and the place for it, I think I could point out some great benefits, moral, social and political, arising from this institution. But however that may be, one thing is clear to my mind beyond all cavil or question, and that is, that the further agitation of this subject can produce nothing but evil; evil to the master, greater evil to the slave; evil to the North and to the South; evil to the country and to the church; evil which will be felt in all time, and in eternity. For this evil, you of the North must bear the responsibility. It will meet you on earth, and it will meet you at the bar of God. In that day, these flimsy veils of ignorance and prejudice will be withdrawn, and your work and yourselves will be fully revealed.* It will be an awful day to us all.



